Group Care as a Secure Base Is This An Oxymoron?

Department of Defense

Making a Difference in Early Care and Education

Barbara Thompson
Office of Children and Youth
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Structural Characteristics

- ✓**Staff:child ratios and group size**
- ✓**Professional qualifications and ongoing staff training**
- ✓**Adult environment**
  - *–Sinks (diapering/handwashing/food prep) and diaper changing tables with steps to avoid lifting*
  - *–Comfortable, adult rockers (without pinching or head entrapments)*
  - *–Good sight lines*
- ✓**Age appropriate learning environment**
  - *–Variety and multiples of toys*
  - *–Displayed on low, accessible shelving*

Food Prep Area

Process Quality

- ✓ **Policies and practices that protect children**
  - *–Child abuse prevention*
  - *–Fire and safety*
  - *–Health*
- ✓ **Staff:child interactions**
- ✓ **Child:child interactions**
- ✓ **Developmentally and individually appropriate program**
  - *–ITERS/FDCRS*
  - *–Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (ORCE)*
  - *–Caregiver Interaction Scale*

“Relationships created in the earliest years are believed to differ from later relationships in that they are formative and constitute a basic structure within which all meaningful development unfolds…..”

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000

Relationships – Relationships Relationships

✓Brain research has shown nurturing is crucial for emotional, social, and intellectual development

✓Security is established through sensitive, loving, consistent, and appropriate responsiveness

✓Caregivers must respond to children's discomforts swiftly by reading their cues accurately in order for children to develop trust that their needs will be met

Secure Attachment Relationships

✓**Forming secure attachment relationships is a child's most important accomplishment**

✓**Secure attachments prepare children to be confident and independent learners with strong social skills**

- ***Attention span is greater***
- ***More persistence***
- ***More successful at problem solving***

✓**Teachers become attachment figures for children**

- ***Provide physical and emotional care***

What do Infants and Toddlers Learn in Relationships?

- ✓"I am safe" - security
- ✓"Someone cares about me" - empathy
- ✓"I can communicate" - relatedness
- ✓"I can figure things out" – problem solving
- ✓"I can pretend" – abstract thinking, creativity
- ✓"I can connect 2 or more ideas" – logical thought, extend learning

Source: *Building Healthy Minds* (1999)

"Relationships are the context for the development of babies. Strong, ongoing relationships need to be guaranteed and supported by policy."

Ron Lally

A Guide to Social-Emotional Growth and

Policies and Practices that Encourage Positive Relationships

- ✓Assign a primary teacher to each child
- ✓Individualize care
- ✓Establish clear, consistent, predictable routines
- ✓Institutionalize continuity of care
- ✓Provide cultural continuity and common language
- ✓Use “teacher talk”
- ✓Coach children in positive interactions with peers

"If the child feels emotionally lost in the child-care relationship, with no reliable adult to turn to when he needs help or when he wants to share a discovery, this experience will mar the toddler's emotional investment in himself, in others, and in the world at large."

Dr. Alicia Lieberman
The Emotional Life of the Toddler
(1993)

Separations

- ✓**Turnover is stressful for programs, children, and families**
  - *–Children are emotionally attached to their teachers*
  - *–Impacts their development of close, trusting relationships*
  - *with important adults so they feel secure and confident*

- ✓**Children will experience multiple losses when they transition to other activity rooms**
  - *–A place he or she has come to know and trust*
  - *–A teacher he or she depends on and adores*
  - *–Children he or she has befriended*

Responsive Curricula

- ✓Observe each child in action
- ✓Listen to children's ideas and actions
- ✓Document the child's interests and capabilities
- ✓Develop and adapt teachers' efforts driven by the child's interests
- ✓Introduce materials and experiences based on observations
- ✓Expand and build upon children's initial understanding and teachers' observations
- ✓Reflect on what is seen and name children's interests

For More Information

- http://www.mfrc.dod-qol.org/MCY
- http://www.zerotothree.org
- http://nccic.org
- http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/infant-toddler_transitions/infant_and_toddler_transitions.pdf

Barbara Thompson > barbara.thompson@osd.mil

"Above all, we must realize that each of us makes a difference with our life. Each of us impacts the world around us every single day. We have a choice to use the gift of our life to make a world a better place – or not to bother."

Jane Goodall